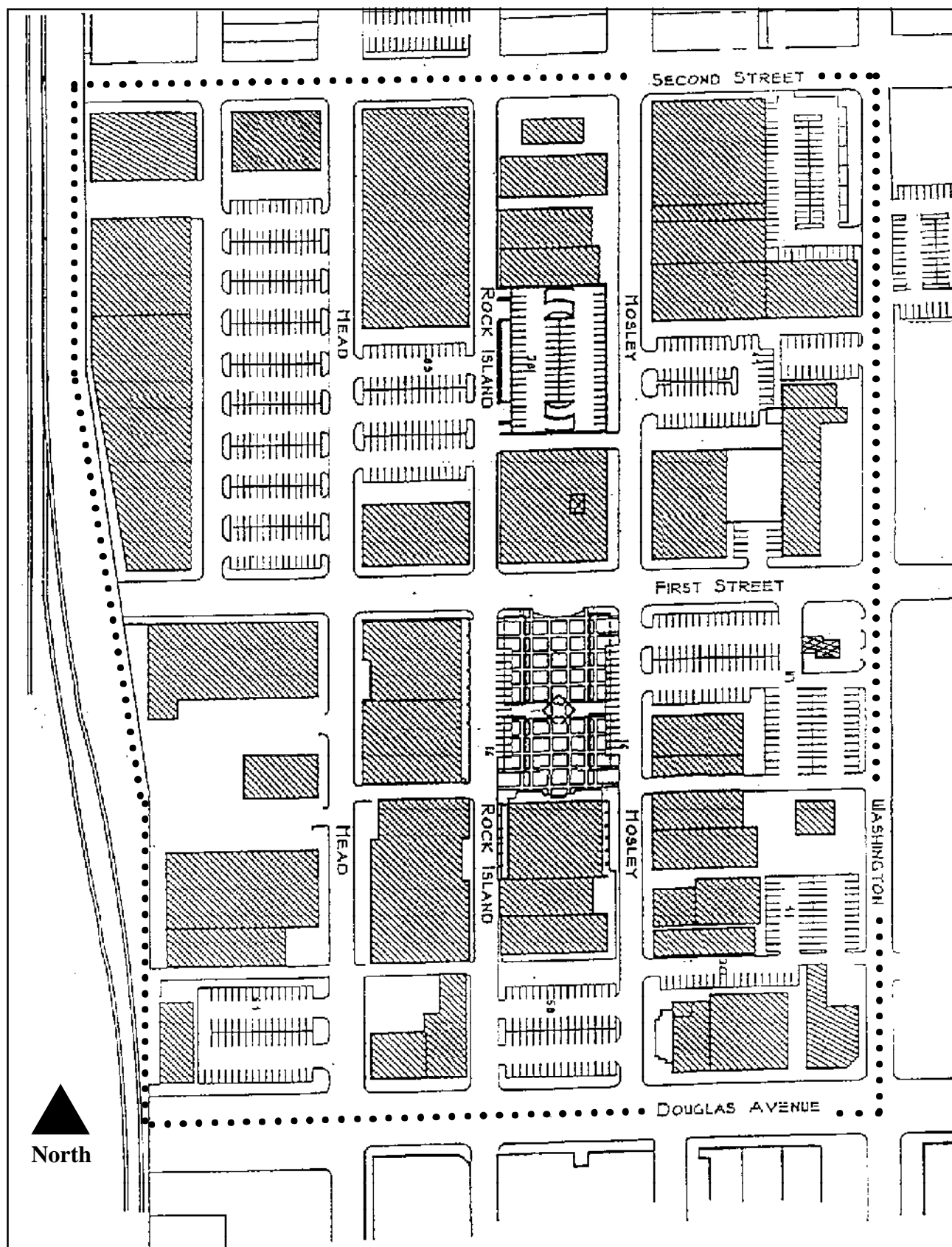


Introduction





Boundaries for the Old Town District in Wichita, Kansas.

For a historic overview of the Old Town District, please refer to the East Douglas Avenue II Historic District Local Historic Resource Survey Report as prepared by Sheryll White and Terry Ward, March, 1989.



Revitalization efforts in Old Town include brick paving, trees and benches.



Even structures that have suffered loss of building fabric merit preservation and adaptive reuse in Old Town.

Introduction

This guidebook presents design guidelines for the Old Town Overlay District in Wichita, Kansas. The district boundaries encompass roughly twelve city blocks, containing approximately fifty properties. The district is bounded by Douglas Street, Washington Street, Second Street and the ATSF Railroad right-of-way (see map at left).

The primary purpose of these guidelines is to provide guidance to property owners, City staff and the Old Town Design Review Committee in conducting its review and granting its approval of exterior alterations and additions to all structures and to proposed new construction and demolition in the district.

The guidelines reflect a basic preservation philosophy: to encourage the preservation and careful treatment of the historic resources within the district, while recognizing the need for the contemporary economic use of these structures. The guidelines neither dictate taste nor assure good design. Rather, they are intended to be a means for balancing the historic qualities of these structures with the demands of contemporary use.

The Period of Significance

The Old Town District has a *period of significance*, which is the time during which the area gained its architectural and historical importance. It is generally recognized that a certain amount of time must pass before the historical significance of a property can be evaluated. The National Register of Historic Places, for example, generally requires that a property be at least 50 years old or have extraordinary importance before it may be considered for listing.

Old Town, for example, has a period of significance which spans approximately thirty years, from 1900 to 1930. Although development in the district began in the mid-1880s and has continued until the present, the majority of the existing historic structures date from this “period of significance.” Throughout this period, the district was witness to the construction of a number of buildings and alterations which have become an integral part of its character. Conversely, a few new structures were built, or alterations made, after this period which are generally considered non-contributing. In general, keep this in mind:

Early alterations, additions or construction more than 50 years old may have become historically significant and thus merit preservation.

Many additions or alterations to buildings in the district that have taken place in the course of time are themselves evidence of the history of the building and its neighborhood and therefore may merit preservation.

More recent alterations, additions or new construction that are not historically significant may be removed.

For example, plywood siding may presently obscure the original masonry. In this case, removal of this alteration, and restoration of the original material is strongly encouraged. Most alterations less than fifty years old lack historic significance.

The Concept of Integrity

In addition to being from a historical period, a property also must have integrity; that is, a sufficient percentage of the structure must date from the period of significance. The majority of the building's structural system and materials should date from the period of significance and its character-defining features also should remain intact. These may include architectural details, as well as the overall mass and form of the building. These are the elements that allow a building to be recognized as a product of its own time.



Additions to existing buildings that are compatible with the overall character of the district and that respect the character defining features of the property may be considered in Old Town.

Planning a Preservation Project

The first step in planning a preservation project is to identify any significant features and materials. Retaining such details will greatly enhance the overall quality of the preservation project. If these features and materials are in good condition, then selecting an appropriate treatment mechanism will provide for proper preservation. In making the selection follow this sequence:

1. If the feature is intact and in good condition, maintain it as such.
2. If the feature is deteriorated or damaged, repair it to its original condition.
3. If it is not feasible to repair the feature, then replace it with one that is the same or similar in character (materials, detail, finish) to the original one. Replace only that portion which is beyond repair.
4. If the feature is missing entirely, reconstruct it from appropriate evidence.
5. If a new feature or addition is necessary, design it in such a way as to minimize the impact on original features.

Significance and Benefits of the District Today

Across the nation, thousands of communities promote historic preservation because doing so contributes to neighborhood livability and quality of life, minimizes negative impacts on the environment and yields economic rewards. Many property owners are also drawn to historic resources because the quality of construction is typically quite high and the buildings are readily adaptable to contemporary needs. These same reasons apply in Wichita.

Construction quality

Most of the historic structures in the district are of high quality construction. Lumber used came from mature trees and was properly seasoned and it typically was milled to "full dimensions" as well, which often yielded stronger framing. Masonry walls were carefully laid, resulting in buildings with considerable stability. These structures also were thoughtfully detailed and the finishes of materials, including fixtures, wood floors and trim were generally of high quality, all features

that owners today appreciate. By comparison, in today's new construction, materials of such quality are rarely available and comparable detailing is very expensive. The high quality of construction in historic buildings is therefore a "value" for many people.

Adaptability

Owners also recognize that the floor plans of historic buildings easily accommodate comfortable lifestyles and support a diversity of populations. The large spans typical of warehouse structures provide flexible spaces that are particularly adaptable.

Environmental benefits

Preserving a historic structure is also sound environmental conservation policy because "recycling" a building saves energy and reduces the need for producing new construction materials. Three types of energy savings occur: First, energy is not consumed to demolish the existing building and dispose of the resulting debris. Second, energy is not used to create new building materials, transport them and assemble them on site. Finally, the "embodied" energy, that which was used to create the original building and its components, is preserved.

By "reusing" older materials in a historic building, demand is also reduced to harvest new lumber and other materials that also may have negative effects on the environment of other locales where these materials are produced. Because older buildings, when properly used, are often more energy-efficient than new construction, heating and cooling needs are reduced as well.

Economic benefits

Historic resources are finite and cannot be replaced, making them precious commodities that many buyers seek. Therefore, preservation adds value to private property. Many studies across the nation document that, where local historic districts are established, property values typically rise, or at least are stabilized. In this sense, recognition of a historic district appears to help establish a climate for investment. Property owners within the district know that the time and money they spend on improving their properties will be matched with similar efforts on surrounding lots; these investments will not be undermined by inappropriate construction next door. These same benefits occur in a conservation district.

Preservation projects also contribute more to the local economy than do new building programs because each dollar spent on a preservation project has a higher percentage devoted to labor and to purchase of materials available locally. By contrast, new construction typically devotes a higher percentage of each dollar spent to materials that are produced outside of the local economy and to special construction skills that may be imported as well. Therefore, when money is spent on rehabilitating a building, it has a higher "multiplier effect," keeping more money circulating in the local economy.

Rehabilitating a historic building also can cost less than constructing a new one. In fact, the guidelines for older structures presented in this document promote cost-saving measures: They encourage smaller and simpler solutions, which in themselves provide savings. Preserving building elements that are in good repair is preferred, for example, to replacing them. This typically is less expensive. In some instances, appropriate restoration procedures may cost more than less sensitive treatments. In such cases, property owners are to some extent compensated for this extra effort, in the added value that conservation district designation provides. Special economic incentives also exist to help offset potential added costs.

Responsibility of ownership

Ownership of a historic property carries both the benefits described above and also responsibility to respect the historic character of the property and its setting. While this responsibility does exist, it does not automatically translate into higher construction or maintenance costs. In the case of new construction, for example, these design guidelines focus on providing a building front interesting to pedestrians, not on a particular building style. Ultimately, residents and property owners should recognize that heritage conservation is a long-range community policy that promotes economic well-being and overall viability of the city at large and that they play a vital role in helping to implement that policy through careful stewardship of the area's older buildings.

What are Design Guidelines?

Design guidelines convey community policies about design. As such, they provide a common basis for making decisions about work that may affect the appearance of individual properties or the overall character of the district. However, they do not dictate solutions. Instead, they define a range of appropriate responses to a variety of specific design issues. For example, the guidelines suggest that new buildings should have an overall character similar to those seen historically, but they do not dictate specific styles. Guidelines also identify some design approaches that are inappropriate in this context. For example, the guidelines state that sandblasting masonry is prohibited because it will damage the protective finish of exterior brick.

Goals for Design Review in the Old Town District

In general, the intended result of design review is to preserve the integrity of historic resources in the district and to ensure that new construction will be in character with the important historic fabric in both scale and character. Therefore the City of Wichita endorses the following design goals for the district:

Goals for the treatment of historic properties:

- a. Maintain the integrity of each individual historic structure, by preserving its character-defining features and by avoiding alterations that would remove or obscure its historic character.
- b. Enhance the perception of the original character of the historic structures, by restoring damaged historic features and reconstructing missing ones (where adequate documentation exists of what was there historically) and by removing non-contributing alterations.
- c. Preserve and enhance one's ability to perceive a sense of time and place in the district during its period of significance.

Goal for the design of new buildings:

The district has already seen change, and it will continue to see change. It is the City's intent to encourage high quality development while protecting the heritage that makes the district special.

The goal is to accommodate change in a manner that is compatible with the historic character of the district during its period of significance.

Change should be reflected in subtle ways, with differences in detail, rather than in broad-scale features, such as building massing and materials. Therefore, new construction should be similar to that seen historically in overall mass, form and materials.

General design goals for the district:

- Protect the integrity of the district
- Protect the sense of time and place conveyed by the buildings as a collection
- Promote a sense of identity for the district
- Protect property values and investments
- Minimize negative impacts on adjacent properties from inappropriate development
- Encourage pedestrian activity
- Convey a sense of human scale

When reviewing a project using the guidelines that follow, the City will consider how each design proposal helps to meet these goals.

The Format for a Guideline

Each design guideline in this document typically has four components

1. **Policy statement** - describes a desired state or condition of the design element being discussed.
2. **Design Guidelines Statement** - typically performance-oriented, describes a desired design treatment.
3. **Supplementary Information** - may include additional requirements, or may provide an expanded explanation. This information is listed in lower case letters.
4. **Illustrations** - may be provided to clarify the intent of the guideline.



Many structures are candidates for rehabilitation and adaptive reuse in Old Town.

It is important to note that all components of a design guideline constitute the material upon which the City will make its determination of the appropriateness of a proposed project.

All Projects

1 Awnings and Canopies

Historically, awnings and canopies have been a part of the Old Town District and using them in rehabilitation projects and new construction is encouraged.

- 2 80. **A fixed metal canopy may be considered.** Canopies are especially appropriate over exposed loading docks.

- Appropriate supporting mechanisms are wall-mounted brackets, chains and posts.

3

4



A fixed metal canopy is permitted where evidence demonstrates that one existed during the building's period of significance.

Sample of the guideline format used in this document